

## Avoid Foodborne Illness

# Fight BAC!®

The US food supply is among the safest in the world, but organisms that you can't see, smell, or taste—bacteria, viruses and tiny parasites—are everywhere in the environment. These microorganisms—called pathogens—can invade food and cause illness, sometimes severe and even life-threatening illness, especially in young children, older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems. In pregnant women, foodborne illness can endanger their unborn babies.

The most common symptoms of foodborne illness are diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, head- or muscle-aches, and fever. Symptoms usually appear 12 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food but may occur between 30 minutes and 4 weeks later. Most people recover within 4 to 7 days without needing antibiotic treatment.

If symptoms are severe or the ill person is very young, very old, pregnant, or already ill, call your doctor immediately.

**Everyone should follow these  
four simple steps to food safety**



## 1. Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.

Bacteria, viruses, and parasites can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, and countertops. Here's how to **Fight BAC!®**:

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.
- Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- Important: Rinse raw produce in water. Don't use soap or detergents. If necessary, use a small vegetable brush to remove surface dirt.

## Who is at risk

Young children, pregnant women, older adults and persons with weakened immune systems are at a higher risk for foodborne illness. Immune systems may be weakened by medical treatments, such as steroids or chemotherapy, or by conditions, such as AIDS, cancer or diabetes. You are also at increased risk if you suffer from liver disease or alcoholism or if you have decreased stomach acidity (due to gastric surgery or the chronic use of antacids).

## If you are at risk

If you face a higher risk of foodborne illness you are advised not to eat:

- Raw fish or shellfish, including oysters, clams, mussels and scallops
- Raw or unpasteurized milk or soft cheeses unless they are labeled "made with pasteurized milk"
- Refrigerated patés or meat spreads (canned or shelf stable patés and meat spreads may be eaten)
- Raw or lightly cooked eggs or foods containing raw or lightly cooked eggs, including certain salad dressings, cookie and cake batters, sauces and beverages such as unpasteurized egg nog (foods made from commercially pasteurized eggs are safe to eat)
- Refrigerated smoked seafood unless in a cooked dish such as a casserole
- Raw or undercooked meat or poultry
- Raw sprouts (alfalfa, clover and radish)
- Unpasteurized or untreated fruit juices or vegetable juices (these juices will carry a warning label)

Important: Some foods that are bought pre-cooked should be reheated because they can become contaminated with pathogens after they have been processed and packaged. These foods include: hot dogs, luncheon meats (cold cuts), fermented and dry sausage and other deli-style meat and poultry products.





## 2. Separate: Don't cross-contaminate.

Cross-contamination is the word for how bacteria, viruses, and parasites can be spread from one food product to another. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs, so keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Here's how to **Fight BAC!®**:

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- If possible, use a different cutting board for raw meat, poultry and seafood products.
- Always wash hands, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils with hot, soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.
- Use separate plates for cooked food and raw foods.

## 3. Cook: Cook to proper temperatures.

Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful pathogens that cause foodborne illness. The best way to **Fight BAC!®** is to:

- Use a clean thermometer that measures the internal temperature of cooked food to make sure meat, poultry, and casseroles are cooked to the temperatures in the chart at right.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. If you use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked, use pasteurized eggs.
- Fish should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.
- When cooking in a microwave oven, make sure there are no cold spots where pathogens can survive. For best results, cover food, stir, and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravy to a boil when reheating.



## 4. Chill: Refrigerate promptly.

Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep harmful pathogens from growing and multiplying. So, set your refrigerator no higher than 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Check these temperatures occasionally with an appliance thermometer. Then, **Fight BAC!®** by following these steps:

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within two hours or sooner.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.



Learn more about **Fight BAC!®** at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

### For more information:

US Department of Agriculture, Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1- 888-MPHOTLINE TTY: 800 256-7076

US Food and Drug Administration, Food Information Hotline - 888 SAFEFOOD

### Safe cooking temperatures

Internal temperature	
<b>Ground Meat &amp; Meat Mixtures</b>	
Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160°F
Turkey, Chicken	165°F
<b>Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb</b>	
Medium Rare	145°F
Medium	160°F
Well Done	170°F
<b>Poultry</b>	
Chicken & Turkey, whole	165°F
Poultry breasts, roast	165°F
Poultry thighs, wings	165°F
Duck & Goose	165°F
Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165°F
<b>Fresh Pork</b>	
Medium	160°F
Well Done	170°F
<b>Ham</b>	
Fresh (raw)	160°F
Pre-cooked (to reheat)	140°F
<b>Eggs &amp; Egg Dishes</b>	
Eggs	Cook until yolk & white are firm
Egg dishes	160°F
<b>Seafood</b>	
Fin Fish	145°F
or flesh is opaque & separates easily with fork	
Shrimp, Lobster	Shells red & flesh
& Crabs	pearly & opaque
Clams, Oysters & Mussels	Shells are open
<b>Leftovers &amp; Casseroles</b>	165°F